The Diluted Standard of Righteousness and the Illusion of Salvation

One of the most subtle spiritual dangers is the tendency of the religious person, given to sin, to construct a diluted standard of righteousness in order to preserve the illusion that he is on the path of salvation.

Instead of looking to the righteousness of God and conforming to that absolute standard, he redefines what it means to “be a believer,” choosing a convenient version that does not require renunciation, real repentance, and deep change. This self-deception is fueled by a lack of knowledge of the Scriptures, wherein God’s plan is revealed—namely, to bring man to the measure of the stature of Christ.

As Scripture says in Ephesians 4:13: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Most people base their hope of salvation exclusively on the mercy of God, without understanding that this mercy is not an excuse to remain unchanged, but an opportunity offered by God for transformation. The mindset—“God is merciful, therefore I will be saved regardless of my life”— ignores the fact that the mercy of God is always accompanied by a call to holiness.

This mentality contributes to the undervaluing of the heavenly standard, because the person no longer feels the need to conform to the righteousness of Christ. Instead of seeing grace as support to rise to the stature of Christ, he uses it as a justification for spiritual stagnation. Thus, he no longer seeks a transformed life, but merely emotional consolation.

Scripture shows that the grace of God is not intended to keep us in a state of spiritual comfort, but to lead us to a life transformed through repentance.

As Scripture says in Titus 2:11–12: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”

When misunderstood, grace becomes a pretext to avoid confronting sin, denying self, and going through the painful — yet necessary — process of sanctification.

In such cases, spiritual discernment is impaired, and a person ends up ignoring the ultimate purpose of salvation — conformity to the image of Christ. Instead of allowing himself to be shaped according to the divine pattern, he creates his own criteria for spiritual evaluation.

This approach produces a diluted version of righteousness, in which man reserves the right to decide which sins are serious and which can be tolerated. He chooses which areas of his life should change and which may remain untouched. It is a subtle form of self-justification, where sin is minimized and the conscience is soothed by comparison with the deeds of others, rather than by measuring against God's standard.

Sins such as drunkenness, fornication, or smoking are easily recognized as serious and condemnable. Yet the diluted standard appears when other sins — more subtle or socially accepted — are ignored, minimized, or tolerated.

This mindset creates the illusion of a clean life, but in reality hides a false righteousness, built on human criteria rather than the standard of God. Thus, sin continues to work in secret, under the mask of a religious life.

God's call is clear: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) — this is not an invitation to selective morality, but to a high and holy life modeled after Christ. It is not about a few outward adjustments or religious gestures, but about a radical transformation according to God's heavenly standard.

Authentic righteousness is not relative — it is the righteousness of God: absolute, holy, and unchanging. It does not adapt to man's preferences; rather, it calls man to conform to the divine character.

Only by aspiring to this absolute righteousness can we be counted worthy to be "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God," as it is written: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Ephesians 2:19)

In the light of God's righteousness, we must examine ourselves not only concerning obvious sins, but also those accepted by many who consider themselves born of God — yet remain sins in His eyes and make us unworthy to be fellowcitizens with the saints and members of His household.

Examples of ignored — diluted yet real — sins that are unacceptable in the Kingdom of God include: evading taxes or legal debts; slander or evil speaking; uncontrolled anger; consuming worldly content (TV, internet); beaches and swimming pools — immodest exposure of the body; disobedience to authorities (such as illegal driving or

breaking traffic laws); stealing by copying (cheating in school or other educational settings)…

In contrast to righteousness, a life lived in sin — even if masked by a religious identity — produces unrest, inner emptiness, and dissatisfaction. The man who declares himself a believer but continues to live in sin will not find the rest God has promised.

Sin is not limited to visible deeds; it also includes attitudes and choices that contradict the character of God. True righteousness requires a life that is pure not only in appearance, but in the depth of our motives and decisions. This is why we are called to look honestly and courageously at those aspects of life that are often overlooked.

One such aspect, often ignored, is gain obtained dishonestly — a sin widespread yet rarely confronted. Though often justified in various contexts or overlooked from habit, this kind of gain, when practiced by one who claims to be born of the righteous God, is a grave offense against the righteousness to which Christ calls us, and a defiance of the justice of God's Kingdom.

Moreover, a dishonest life brings reproach upon the Name of God, as Scripture says: "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." (Romans 2:24)

The subject of dishonest gain is addressed here because this problem has become alarming, spreading disturbingly among those who consider themselves born again. It is intended both as a warning cry and as a help for those who have been misled into thinking that dishonest gain is not a serious sin — when in reality, it is serious enough to hinder the new birth from the righteous God.

This post is an excerpt from the booklet "Life Lived in the Righteousness of Christ", which you can read in full, free of charge. More studies and resources for spiritual awakening are available at https://www.unmodifiedword.com.